

Project Life Cycle Selection Cheat Sheet

Predictive (Waterfall) Life Cycle

- Best for stable requirements and low uncertainty.
- Detailed upfront planning with fixed scope, schedule, and budget.
- Works well in construction, manufacturing, and compliance-heavy projects.

Iterative Life Cycle

- Builds the solution through repeated cycles and feedback.
- Useful when requirements are unclear at the start.
- Each iteration refines the product toward the final vision.

Incremental Life Cycle

- Delivers usable pieces of the solution step by step.
- Each increment is functional and adds value.
- Reduces risk by providing working outputs earlier.

Agile Life Cycle

- Combines iterative and incremental approaches.
- Short cycles (sprints) deliver frequent, usable value.
- Welcomes change and adapts quickly to customer feedback.

Hybrid Life Cycle

- Mixes predictive and Agile methods in one project.
- Predictive for stable, regulated parts of work.
- Agile for uncertain or innovative areas.

Tip: Match the life cycle to project characteristics such as uncertainty, feedback needs, and organizational readiness. No one life cycle fits all projects.